

Advice note for a pre-registration inspection of a free school

School name	Nottingham Free School
DfE registration number	999/1739
Unique reference number (URN)	1739
Inspection number	447004
Inspection dates	25 June 2014
Reporting inspector	Michael Best

Information about the inspection

This inspection was conducted by Ofsted at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. It was carried out under section 99 of the Education and Skills Act 2008.¹

Context of the school

The proprietor, Torch Academy Gateway Trust, seeks to establish a free school for up to 587 male and female students aged 11 to 18 years in the Mapperley area of Nottingham. The school will occupy converted business premises that were originally a textile factory. Phase one of the conversion will start on 28 July 2014 and is due to be completed by the end of August 2014; the second phase is due to be completed by August 2015. The school plans to open on 1 September 2014 with 90 Year 7 students, with successive intakes of 90 Year 7 students bringing the school up to full complement by 2020.

The school will provide a mainstream secondary education with specialisms in science and art; an extended school day until 4.45pm will provide just over an hour of extra-curricular provision on Mondays to Thursdays when the school is open. This includes study support as well as a range of sporting and other activities.

The school aims 'to provide a highly aspirational education alongside opportunities for students to develop into well-rounded members of the community'.

Compliance with the regulations

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The school is likely to meet all the requirements for registration. Implementation could not be seen as the school is not yet operating. The proposed provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is appropriate for the age range of the students and reflects the school's aims. The school has drawn up a bespoke scheme to promote students' personal, social and health education and citizenship through the taught curriculum, and this will permeate through extra-curricular activities and individual support as part of the school's commitment to the extended school day.

The school's proposed programme for personal development focuses on raising students' understanding of themselves and others, extending their personal strengths and their confidence and self-esteem, in order for them to learn and

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/25/section/99

succeed in full-time education. It provides a secure basis for preparing them for their future lives in higher education, society and in the workplace. Developing students' self-respect, understanding and tolerance of others as citizens within different communities forms an integral part of the provision, together with an emphasis on living healthy lives. The focus placed on helping students to understand and respect differences, and to enjoy healthy relationships regardless of colour or creed includes consideration of peer pressure, mental health issues and combating extremism.

The school's policies and procedures promote high expectations of students' behaviour in and out of school. Students will be supported in developing resilience, especially when faced with the temptations of smoking, alcohol, drugs and violence. They will learn about the physical and emotional changes they experience in their teenage years in the context of healthy relationships and safe sexual practices. Guidance in making the right choices when faced with difficult decisions and situations, and being able to learn from their mistakes, will be developed alongside such topics as 'understanding our brain' and 'the power of positive thinking'. Students' cultural development will be promoted through visits and visitors. The school's plans include helping students to understand civil and criminal law, and to value their rights and responsibilities within a democratic society. They will be helped to lead healthy and safe lives as active members of their communities, and develop a healthy set of values and attitudes based on a strong moral and social code. They will develop the skills needed to work hard and succeed through taking part in social, sporting and collaborative projects; for example, students in Year 7 will engage in a recycling project to make the school greener. Students will develop a broad knowledge of public institutions and services in England through discrete topics within the citizenship programme.

The school has taken suitable steps to ensure that partisan political views are not promoted in the teaching of any subject and, where political issues are brought to the attention of the students, that reasonable steps will be taken to offer a balanced presentation of opposing views at all times. Guidance is provided for staff and included in the school's curriculum policy.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school is likely to meet all of the requirements for registration. Implementation could not be seen as the school is not yet operating. The school's safeguarding policy reflects the latest guidance provided by the Secretary of State and includes specific information about the local safeguarding board. The policy provides clear guidance about recognising and reporting abuse. The Principal designate and named person for child protection is due to undertake the higher level training before the school opens. There are contingency plans in place to provide appropriate cover from other schools within the Trust should this training not be completed. All staff will be provided with appropriate training in safeguarding and basic first aid as part of their induction programme prior to the first students being admitted so that requirements are likely to be met. Those involved in appointing staff have completed recognised

training courses in safe recruitment. The school has a suitable policy and procedures for recruiting staff which it is implementing effectively. All the required checks are being made on staff and the members of the proprietorial body as they are appointed, and the single central register is being populated as these checks are completed.

The school's policies for promoting students' good behaviour, preventing bullying and ensuring their health and safety, both in school and when on visits, meet requirements. Suitable and secure records will be maintained of the sanctions imposed on students for serious misbehaviour. The first aid policy provides appropriate guidance and it is planned to train named staff as higher level first aiders before the school opens. Contingency plans are in place should this training not be completed as planned before the first students are admitted. The school's admission and attendance registers are likely to meet requirements.

Work on the school's phase one conversion is scheduled to be completed in August 2014. Plans include a fire risk assessment to be made as soon as the accommodation is ready and before staff and students occupy the premises. There are plans to deal with any required actions or recommendations before the school opens. The Principal designate intends to provide the Department for Education with copies of the required certificates, evidence of compliance with building regulations and the fire risk assessment. These actions are likely to meet requirements. The school has due regard to the Equality Act 2010, with an action plan drawn up to develop access to the premises, the curriculum and to information.

Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

The school is likely to meet all of the requirements for registration. All the required checks are being made on staff and the members of the proprietorial body, including their suitability for working with children, as they are appointed. These are being suitably recorded on the school's single central register. The school's records of the checks made on the identity and qualifications (where required) of staff, together with their medical fitness and any other checks, are complete for those already in post and are in the process of being completed for others as they are appointed. The school obtains and checks written references on all applicants in line with safe recruitment guidelines. The school does not intend to employ staff through an agency but is aware of the procedures to be followed should this be necessary.

Premises of and accommodation at the school

The school is likely to meet all of the requirements for registration. Plans and specifications were viewed and discussed with the Principal designate as the premises are not being handed over until 28 July 2014. The school will have exclusive and secure occupancy of just over half the premises. Phase one of the conversion will provide sufficient teaching and ancillary accommodation for the first

year; phase two will provide the remainder of the accommodation and be completed by August 2015. The school's accommodation will be completely separated from the other occupiers of the premises both internally and externally. The school's leaders have worked closely with their architect to ensure that the accommodation is well suited to the needs of students. The plans for the accommodation provide a suitable mix of teaching rooms. There will be specialist facilities to support the curriculum, including a science laboratory. A fenced area of grass and all-weather surface, together with tennis courts, will provide facilities for teaching physical education and students' recreation. There will be opportunity to access a sports pavilion which includes the required changing rooms and showers. All teaching rooms will have access to computer facilities and students will be issued with their own tablet computers. There will be a secure reception area at the main entrance. Offices for senior staff and administrators are sited at the front of the school, affording easy access for visitors. The school has ordered furnishings and equipment and these are awaiting delivery for before the first students arrive in September. Mains services are connected to the premises and functional. Arrangements have been made for the maintenance of the premises and for keeping them clean and tidy. Appropriate standards of decoration, internal and external lighting, ventilation, heating and flooring are specified. Arrangements are in hand for a fire risk assessment to have been completed prior to opening and for a second fire risk assessment to be undertaken when phase two of the conversion is completed.

The school's plans indicate that all the requirements regarding hot and cold water supplies are likely to be met. The washroom facilities for students are sufficient for the number sought. There will be suitable washroom facilities for disabled people, staff and visitors, and appropriately equipped medical facilities for students who may be ill. Students will be able to access drinking water throughout the school day, and appropriate signage is specified.

Provision of information

The provision meets all regulations.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The provision meets all regulations.

Recommendation to the Department for Education

Registration

- **YES. This school is likely to meet all regulations when it opens and is recommended for registration.**

Recommended number of day pupils: 587

Recommended number of boarders: N/a

Recommended age range: 11–18 years

Recommended gender of pupils: Mixed

Recommended type of special educational needs: N/a.